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'We know'— Soviets have 'killer satellite' capability, Adm. Turner claims

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WASHINGTON — The Soviet Union has "killer satellites" capable of shooting down United States satellites in orbit, CIA Director Adm. Stansfield Turner said Tuesday.

"We know," Turner said at a breakfast meeting with reporters, "that the Soviet Union has been testing antisatellites and this brings them to an operational capability. They have an operational capability today."

President Carter Monday denied at a press conference that the Soviet Union can destroy U.S. satellites used to communicate attack orders in case of a nuclear war.

Pentagon sources later said that the Soviet antisatellite weapons cannot reach the high-flying U.S. satellites that are crucial communications links.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown said last October that it was his judgment that the Soviets had already developed the operational capability to destroy at least some U.S. satellites, apparently those flying in a lower orbit.

The U.S. has been developing similar space weapons but its pro-

gram is years behind the Soviets, sources said.

Turner, who has generated a good deal of controversy by firing hundreds of CIA operatives stationed at the agency's headquarters in Langley, Va., said that the U.S. reliance on technological spying methods has increased over the years and is "burgeoning every day."

"We are more dependent on them than in the past," he said.

But technical spying devices do not predict the future or measure Soviet intentions, he said, so human spies and analysts still perform an important role.

Turner said the personnel cuts he has made do not reduce the number of spies working overseas. "They were excess people," he said, "who sit there and clog the system, making clandestine collection ineffective."

Some cuts, Turner said, were designed to open up upper-level jobs to younger CIA agents so that the agency will have trained people to fill top spots as older officials retire.

The CIA, he said, "has been run effectively like a family business for years. We've had an abundance of talent. But these people are all close to retirement."

Turner attacked fired intelligence agents who have carried their griev-

ances about their dismissal to the press. "When the spies, the intelligence agents of this country, do not abide by constitutional authority we are all in trouble," he said.

Nevertheless, he insisted that these bearers of some of the nation's most closely-held secrets do not pose a security risk now that they have been fired, left out in the cold.

He singled out Frank Snepp, a CIA official who resigned to write a book about the final days of the South Vietnamese collapse, for criticism, charging that Snepp may have jeopardized the safety of Viet-

namese who worked with the CIA and remained in Vietnam after the fall of Saigon.

Turner said Snepp had promised to show him the manuscript of the book before it was published but then violated that promise.

"The man," Turner said, "is not an honorable man. Random House and CBS (which were involved in the book venture), are culpable in participating in a violation of American law."

He called reports that he was about to lose his job at the CIA "the greatest hoax on the media profession in the year I've been around."